



**Permuda Island Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 07, 2016, 10a-11:25a**

Attendance

<u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
DCR Archaeology, Nathan Henry	Yes
Town of North Topsail Beach, Deb Hill	Yes
Town of North Topsail Beach, Stuart Turille	Yes
North Carolina Coastal Federation, Mike Giles	Yes
Town of North Topsail Beach PD, Chief C.J. Fillinger	No
<u>Community Members and Community Organizations Members</u>	
Mike Yawn	Yes
<u>Others Present</u>	
Paula Gillikin, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Central Sites Manager	

Reserve-wide Administrative Update – Fall 2016 (Rebecca Ellin via Paula Gillikin)

- ***Staffing News***
 - Elise Gilchrist joined the Reserve team in August as our Communications and Project Management Specialist. Elise has a Bachelor's degree in Animal Behavior. Shortly after graduating, she moved to Thailand and spent two years working as a research assistant for a non-profit organization that studies Asian elephant cognition and promotes wildlife conservation. It was through this experience that she recognized her passion for science communication. She then held a position at a marine conservation field station in Mexico working as a media and communications specialist.
 - Kate (Murray) Jones joined the Reserve in October as our Northern Sites Manager. Kate has a Bachelor's degree in Biology with a minor in Environmental Studies from the College of Charleston and a professional degree in Landscape Architecture from The University of British Columbia. She most recently worked with The Nature Conservancy in natural area management of the Nags Head Woods Preserve and served as the GIS analyst and community engagement coordinator for the NC Coastal Resilience project. Additionally, Kate has landscape design and planning experience in residential and municipal settings and currently serves on the Town of Nags Head's Planning Board.

- *NCNERR Management Plan Update*

Staff are continuing to work on the management plan update for the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve. NOAA is reviewing initial draft chapters of the plan as they are completed to ensure that all required elements are included per the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) management plan guidelines; approximately half of the chapters have been reviewed or are under review currently. The Reserve will then seek input on the full initial draft plan from the LACs, N.C. Coastal Resources Commission (CRC), and the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality. NOAA will then review the final draft management plan for content and compliance with the NERRS management plan guidelines. A 30-day public comment period and three public meetings will be held on the final draft management plan prior to the plan's final publication. Staff are planning to review the full initial draft plan with the LACs at their spring 2017 meetings and share the plan and LAC comments on the plan with the CRC at their April 2017 meeting.

- *Budget*

- The Division of Coastal Management received \$619,322 from NOAA for operation of the NCNERR portion of the Coastal Reserve during this fiscal year, up \$24,872 from last year. The additional funds are being used to cover fixed cost increases and to fund a portion of the temporary staffing positions through the annual budget rather than relying on a variety of different funding sources that vary from year to year.
- The Division of Coastal Management's state appropriations were reduced by \$27,173 this fiscal year as required by the Department of Environmental Quality. As a result, the appropriations allocated for the Reserve program were reduced by approximately \$5,000.

- *Periodic Rules Review*

The Coastal Reserve's rules, 07O, are scheduled to be reviewed by the Rules Review Commission in June 2017 as part of the Periodic Review and Expiration of Existing Rules process (G.S. 150B-21.3A). Staff classified each rule citation in 07O as necessary with substantive public interest, necessary without substantive public interest, or unnecessary per G.S. 150B-21.3A (c)(1). Staff then revised the initial draft classification based on input from the LACs and the CRC supported the revised initial draft classification at its July 2016 meeting. The Department of Environmental Quality approved revised initial draft classification and the classification is currently out for public comment through November 21, 2016. As of October 21, 2016, the approximate mid-point of the public comment period, no comments had been received. After the public comment period closes, staff will compile a report for submittal to the Rules Review Commission that responds to comments received and amends the initial agency determinations if necessary. The LACs will have the opportunity to review the draft report in January 2017 prior to presentation of the report to the CRC at its February 2017 meeting. Any proposed amendments to the rule language received during the public comment period will be considered during the readoption process.

Reserve-wide Policy – (Paula Gillikin)

- *Shellfish Policy*

The Permuda Island Reserve boundaries do not include water; therefore, the shellfish policy will not directly impact the site. However, committee members are interested in the issue and how other Reserve sites

might be affected and requested to be involved. There are currently two shellfish leases at the Masonboro Island Reserve. In November of 2015, we recommended to DMF that no further leases be considered within Reserve boundaries through December 2016. This temporary suspension was enacted to give the Reserve time to consider and evaluate how this activity and siting of leases within the boundaries interacts with the various management designations, programs, rules, and policies that affect the Reserve sites. Concerns the Reserve staff brought forth about this activity include: the unknown ecological impacts of leases, particularly the cumulative impact of multiple leases and how these impacts may jeopardize the Reserve sites' ability to serve as "control" research and monitoring sites; and the ability of other traditional users to effectively utilize the sites and the possible impact to the recreational visitor experience. Reserve staff have since been working to develop an internal policy to describe how shellfish lease requests will be evaluated, to outline how the Reserve will work with DMF to site leases to reduce conflicts with other uses and with ecologically sensitive resources, and to determine what thresholds may be appropriate to ensure that the natural, ambient conditions of the sites are not altered and that the research and long-term monitoring missions of the Reserve are not compromised. We currently anticipate having a final policy completed before the end of the temporary suspension at which time we will begin to review any new proposed leases on a case-by-case basis.

- *Consideration of Reserve-wide Hunting Permit System* (Paula Gillikin)

The Reserve recently had a discussion with staff from the Wildlife Resources Commission (WRC) about potentially implementing a hunting permitting system at all 10 of the Reserve sites. This system would allow Reserve staff to better understand how much hunting occurs at Reserve sites and where; increase public safety; and better balance the various uses of the Reserve. The hunting permit system would be managed entirely by WRC. Hunting would not change at many of the Reserve sites. However, at sites such as the Rachel Carson Reserve, hunting may be limited to a specific time and area to address public safety and annoyance concerns of Beaufort residents and site users.

New Business – Site Update

- *Habitat Map*

The draft habitat map for Permuda was presented to the committee in hard copy.

- *2017 Debris Clean-up*

A 2017 debris clean-up has been tentatively planned for Permuda Island. This will be a part of the North Carolina Coastal Federation's crab pot and debris removal project that has been extended to the southern coast.

- *Illegal Camping*

Illegal camping continues to be an issue on the site, but it seems to be getting better with posting of Reserve boundary markers and notices that camping is not allowed.

Roundtable Discussion

- The committee discussed hunting on Permuda Island and how a Reserve-wide permit system could be beneficial for increasing visitor safety; tracking hunting activities; and balancing the interests of a variety of users. There was a comment about the potential for a permit system to attract more hunters which could potentially be undesirable in small areas such as Permuda.
- Members are concerned about commercial shellfish aquaculture operations being sited in a Reserve that receives federal funding. There is some amount of inherent conflict, including taking public trust space away from other Reserve users.
- Members are concerned about Reserve sites getting overwhelmed with too many shellfish aquaculture operations given that there isn't a lot of research describing impacts.
- Many members are in favor of shellfish aquaculture and tout its benefits such as providing fish habitat; however, there is concern about cumulative impacts and interference with the Reserve as a platform for research and education.
- The committee recommends proceeding with caution and evaluate whether or not it's even appropriate to continue to permit shellfish operations within Reserve boundaries.
- The committee discussed how reserves can protect species, but hunting can help to maintain an ecological balance and contribute to wildlife conservation at those sites if done appropriately.
- The committee discussed illegal camping activity on Permuda.
- The North Carolina Coastal Federation is planning a memorial at Morris Landing to honor the late Lena Ritter. Mike Giles will keep the committee posted about the date.
- The North Carolina Coastal Federation is facilitating the development of a watershed plan for Stump Sound. The Town of North Topsail Beach is interested in learning more and potentially pursuing a plan of their own through 319 funds.
- The committee would like to maintain a meeting frequency of twice per year.

Action Items

Paula will make sure members have the web link for submitting comments related to the classification of Reserve rules.